

Message Text

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62

ACTION ARA-20

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 7738

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR BL

SUBJ: BOLIVIAN INTERIOR MINISTER DISCUSSES NEW NARCOTICS LAW
AND POSSIBLE USG ASSISTANCE

1. IN A CONVERSATION ON DECEMBER 27, MINISTER OF INTERIOR CASTRO TOLD ME THAT THE GOB INTENDS TO MOVE VIGOROUSLY TO CARRY OUT THE NEW NARCOTICS CONTROL LAW ENACTED LAST WEEK. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE ONLY A FEW MINOR CHANGES FROM THE DRAFT WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE EMBASSY A FEW WEEKS AGO (COPIES OF WHICH THE EMBASSY SENT TO INTERESTED WASHINGTON AGENCIES). CASTRO SAID THAT HIS FIRST STEP IS TO GIVE THE LAW AS MUCH DISSEMINATION AS POSSIBLE. HE WISHES TO INTRODUCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM INSTRUCTION ON THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE LAW. IN ADDITION TO WIDESPREAD NEWSPAPER COVERAGE, THE MINISTRY WILL USE RADIO AND TV TO EXPLAIN THE LAW IN AYMARA AND QUECHUA AS WELL AS SPANISH.

2. CASTRO SAID THAT THE GENERAL REACTION TO THE DECREE-LAW HAS BEEN GOOD. HOWEVER, HE HAS INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION THAT THE "MAFIA" IN SANTA CRUZ IS QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE LAW ON ITS ILLICIT OPERATIONS. HE ALSO SAID THAT A GROUP OF FARMERS FROM THE YUNGAS HAD VISITED HIM TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS OVER THE LOSS OF INCOME FROM THE PRODUCTION OF COCA AND WERE WONDERING WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO TAKE STEPS TO ASSIST THEM IN THE CULTIVATION OF ALTERNATIVE CROPS. AT THIS POINT THE MINISTER ASKED WHETHER THE USG COULD HELP FINANCE
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SUBSTITUTE CROPS. I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT THE USG IS INTERESTED

IN AND CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTROL OF TRAFFICKING AND SOURCES OF DRUGS. HOWEVER, WASHINGTON ALREADY HAD INFORMED US THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR OBTAINING US FUNDING TO SUBSIDIZE PRODUCTION OF ALTERNATE CROPS ARE NOT GOOD. I INDICATED THOUGH THAT I WOULD PASS ON TO THE APPROPRIATE WASHINGTON AGENCIES THE MINISTER'S INTEREST IN OUR HELP. I INDICATED THAT I THOUGHT THAT THE ENACTMENT OF THE NEW LAW WOULD HELP TOWARD OBTAINING SOME ASSISTANCE BEYOND THAT BEING CURRENTLY PROVIDED. THE MINISTER REPEATED THAT BOLIVIAN AUTHORITIES INTENDED TO MOVE VIGOROUSLY TO CONTROL COCA PRODUCTION AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING AND ALSO TO REDUCE THE

COCA LEAF CHEWING HABIT, BUT ASSISTANCE WAS NEEDED TO MAKE THEIR EFFORTS MORE EFFECTIVE.

STEDMAN

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